

# Teachers' Attitudes towards Reflective Teaching and Professional Development

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**Abstract**—This paper is about Teachers' Attitudes towards Reflective Teaching and Professional Development. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the different attitudes and beliefs teachers hold about Reflective Teaching and Professional Development. Before providing teachers with the different approaches, strategies and techniques that they can use to reflect upon their teaching practices and hopefully develop professionally, one should have a clear image about the different attitudes these teachers hold about reflection and professional development processes. Thus, this paper mainly aims at exploring these attitudes. The informants of this paper are mainly English language teachers. Because of time constraints, the focus is on teachers of English working in Khemisset. The data collection method used in this study is the questionnaire. The findings of the study confirm that most of informants have got negative attitudes towards reflective teaching and professional development. Future research has to be directed towards a deeper analysis of these attitudes using different research instruments.

**Keywords**—Reflective teaching, professional development, beliefs and attitudes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Different studies have been conducted about Reflective Teaching (RT) and Professional Development (PD) including King (2012) and Guskey (2000). The issue of PD is so complex due to its various approaches and forms. Neil and Morgan (2003) demonstrate that the meaning of teacher PD is challenging for the main stakeholders in the educational world. PD can be viewed conceptually at the macro-level concerns or the micro-level realities (Guskey, 1991). In this regard, Neil and Morgan (2003) and King (2011) maintain that while teachers may view PD in terms of their professional needs, schools may view it in terms of policies, while at national level it may be viewed as regulations for teachers. Another point to be made about PD is that the process of teachers' PD can assume a number of forms, for example, it may be seen as courses or activities with a beginning and an end Barak, Gidron, and Tumiansky (2010). However, Crawford, as cited in King

(2012), argues that the depiction of PD as only formal makes it synonymous with training courses. Instead Fullan (1991) argues that "PD can be viewed as the sum total of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one's career from pre-service teacher education to retirement" (pp. 326-327). Another argument against the formal view of PD is advanced by Bubb and Earley (2008). They deposit that "PD is not defined by courses, activities, or experiences but rather as an outcome from there activities, courses and reflections on day-to-day experiences in the classroom" (p.26). In this article, it has to be noted that the issue of PD is examined and explored from a teacher viewpoint and perspective. Thus, this paper is an attempt to investigate teachers' attitudes towards RT and PD. It is a case study conducted in order to raise the issue of attitudes and their relation to reflective teaching and teachers' professional development.

Based on a deep analysis of the factors that help or hinder the development of PD, King (2012) reports that we appear to know more about why PD fails than why it succeeds. Gusky (1991) states that while there are no definitive characteristics to ensure success, certain conditions have been accepted as being conducive to successful to PD. Opfer and Pedder (2011) categorize these factors under teacher, school leadership, and content. However, although considering and examining all these factors is fundamental for better and more comprehensive understanding of the PD process. Thus, this article is about the teacher as a major factor.

It is noticed that most teachers, if not all, are not really involved in this issue of reflective teaching and professional development. Regardless of the different training programs launched by the ministry of training and education in Morocco and regardless of the free online workshops that are available everywhere and at any time, teachers are not fully involved in the PD process. Another explanation to the choice of this topic is related to my daily contact with colleagues and from my experience as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language. Thus, it was concluded that the problem might be related to attitudes and hence need to be studied. What and how

teachers learn from PD depends largely on their beliefs and attitudes about the value of RT and PD.

There are many factors that can account for the various challenges facing successful teachers' growth professionally. The primary concern of the current study is to investigate the different attitudes teachers hold about RT and PD. This study aims at identifying these beliefs and assumptions about teachers' professional development and their views towards reflective teaching. This study is not about definitions, theories, approaches, or methods of RT or PD since a lot of studies have been done in this regard.

The main concern of this paper is to explore teachers' attitudes towards RT and PD. Hence, the research question of this paper can be stated as follows: What are teachers' attitudes towards RT and PD? It is assumed that these attitudes would differ among teachers and that they would show the degree of teachers' interest in RT and PD.

It is expected that the results of this study would be significant to teachers, teachers' trainers, supervisors, researchers and education policy makers. The results of the study will help teachers become more aware of the relation between their attitudes and their actions, decisions and behaviors. Teachers' trainers and supervisors would hopefully give more importance to teachers' beliefs and assumptions. Therefore, the designed training programs will target teachers' beliefs and opt for changing the attitudes that may hinder teachers' professional development. Researchers also should be interested in examining the relation between attitudes and

actions. Their areas of study need also target questions such as; how do attitudes affect actions, behaviors and decisions? Education policy makers need take primarily into account teachers' attitudes before designing plans and actions to improve the quality of the educational system and precisely when they deal with teachers.

## II. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

In order to obtain the above mentioned objectives and to answer the research questions, a questionnaire has been used. The questionnaire has been used to collect data that reflect teachers' attitudes towards RT and PD. The questionnaire includes mainly three parts. The first part deals with teachers' attitudes towards PD while the second one is about their attitudes regarding RT. The last section is reserved to reveal teachers' view towards the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a means that can help teachers become reflective and develop professionally.

The informants of the study are high school teachers of English in Khemisset. The focus has been on Khemisset because of time constraints. Age, gender, and teaching experience are constant variables.

## III. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this section is to present and discuss the findings of this study. The findings are displayed in statistical charts that provide frequencies. The findings are presented in a way to help the reader better understand and to enable them make compare the responses of the informants.

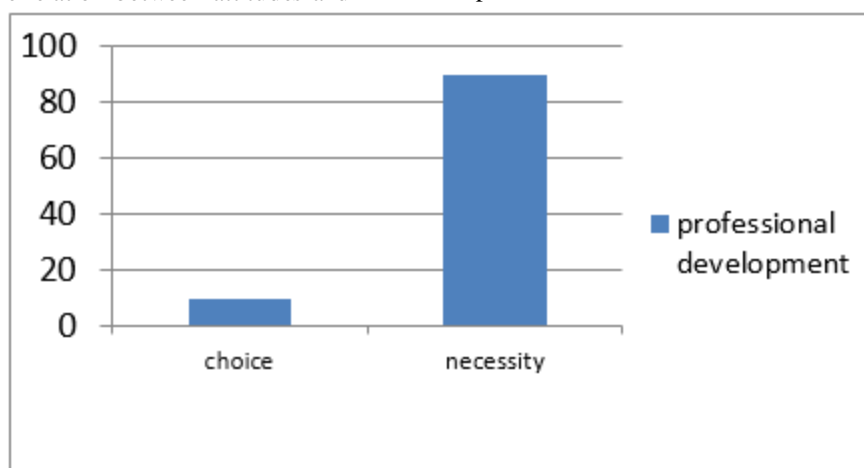


Fig1. Professional development

Figure 1 represents the respondents' responses about the first question in the questionnaire. The question is about whether they consider teachers' professional development choice or necessity. 90% believe that it is a necessity while just 10% consider it as a choice.

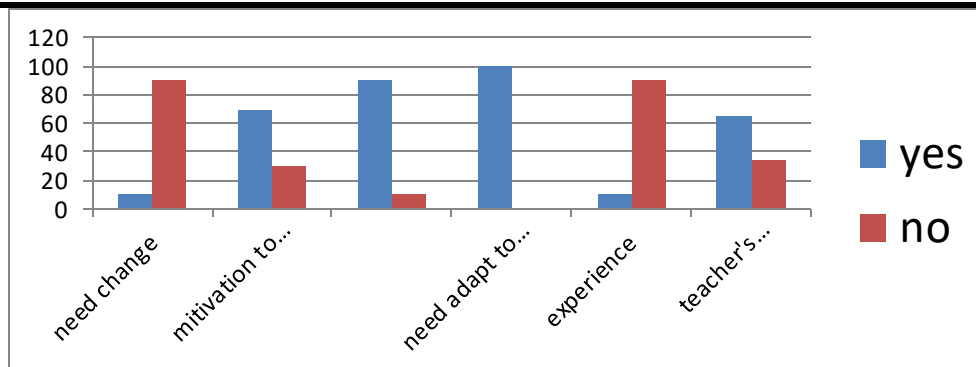


Fig 2. Professional development

Figure 2 is about teachers' attitudes towards PD. It provides the results of the responses to questions related to the need to change, motivation to change, need adapt, experience and the teacher's responsibility towards PD.

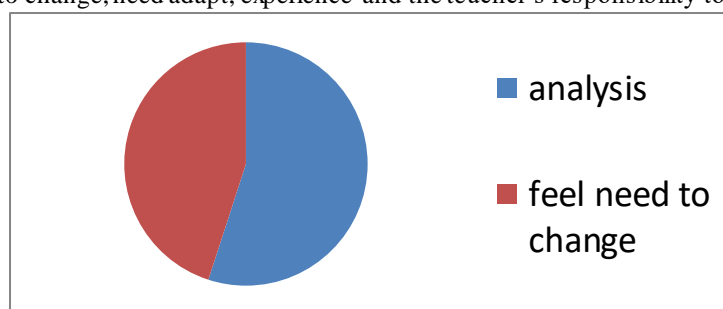


Fig.3: Teaching practices change

Most respondents say that they usually make certain changes in their teaching practices. The question has been about whether those changes are a result of action research or because teachers feel that they need change their behaviors or practices. 70% base those changes on an ongoing analysis while 30 % rely on their feelings.

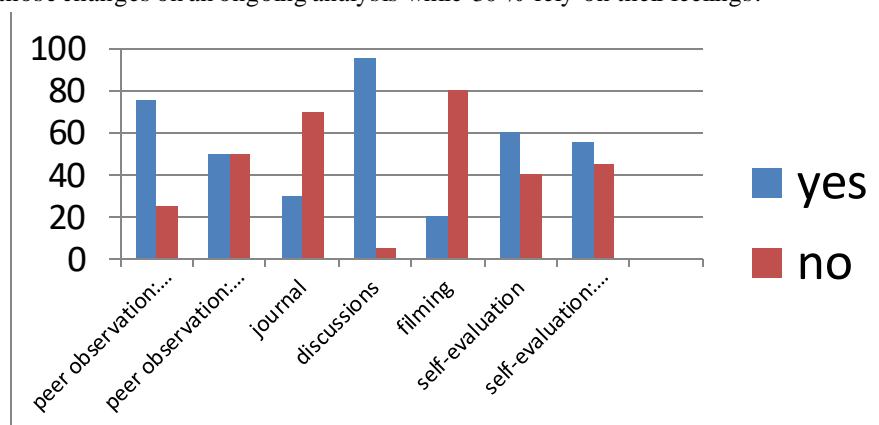


Fig.4: Reflective teaching activities

Figure 4 is about the teacher's everyday practices. Teachers are asked to respond to questions related to the methods or activities that might help teachers develop professionally and become reflective teachers. Most respondents say that they use peer observation as a technique. However, the majority prefer to observe rather than to be observed. Concerning keeping journals, 70% of the respondents assert that they do not write journals. 90% discuss with colleagues classroom issues. Concerning filming as a technique, most teachers do not like to be filmed while teaching. Self evaluation is used by 60% of the respondents but only 50% do so using a checklist.

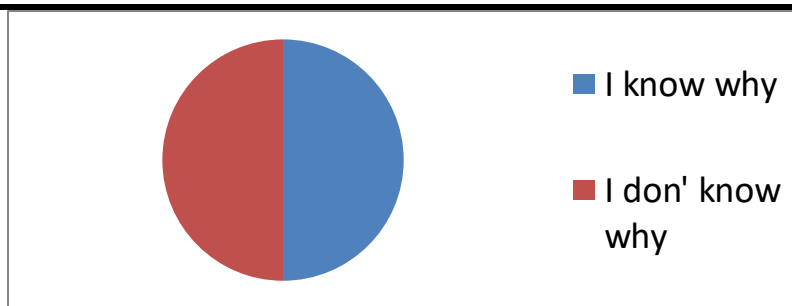


Fig.5: Learners unwillingness to learn

The question is about RT and whether teachers are really engaged in this process of reflection. Half of the respondents say that they try to know why their learners are not willing to learn and try to find answers through ongoing analysis in class and outside. The other half does not know the reasons that may account for their students' unwillingness to learn.

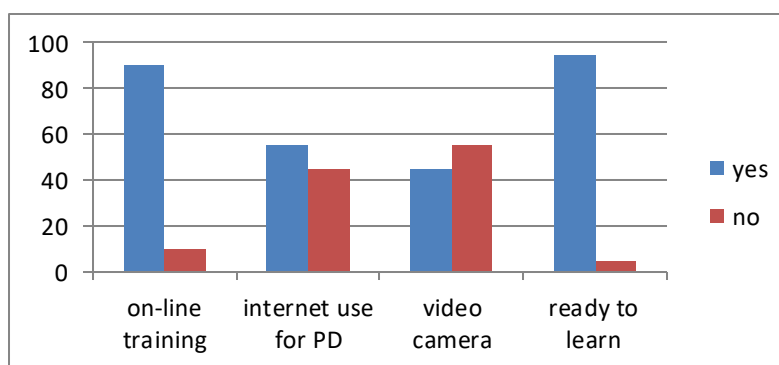


Fig.6: ICT use for PD and RT purposes

As indicated in the figure's title, the question is about teachers' attitudes towards the use of ICT tools for RT and PD purposes. It is noticed that most teachers are motivated and feel that ICT can really help them become reflective and therefore develop professionally.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

This section includes some conclusions, recommendations, and limitations of the study. Concerning the conclusions of the study, it can be stated that it is not easy to study attitudes and it is difficult to measure them. Another general conclusion is that this study has given the chance to raise more issues and questions related to RT and PD. This study raises more questions than answers them. Other specific conclusions can be stated as follows:

- Teachers have got different attitudes towards RT and PD.
- The majority of teachers consider PD as a necessity.
- Teachers are more required to change their teaching behaviors and practices.
- Experience is not the only source of PD.
- Most teachers admit that PD is the teacher's own responsibility.

- Most teachers are aware of the approaches and methods for RT and PD purposes. However, there are different constraints such as "attitudes".
- Most teachers are motivated to use ICT tools for RT and PD purposes.

The above mentioned conclusions lead us to raise the following points as recommendations. Some of these recommendations can be stated as follows:

- More studies are required to achieve better understanding of the issue raised in this paper.
- Teacher trainers are required to give more importance to attitudes when designing programs that seek teachers PD.
- Researchers should raise other questions: Are these attitudes an obstacle to RT and PD? If yes, how? And how such negative attitudes can be well exploited and may be changed?
- In-service and pre-service programs should focus on attitudes.

This paper is not without limitations. Here are some of them,

- The study has not been comprehensive in its approach.
- Limited number of the respondents: not easy and safe to generalize the conclusions.

- The respondents are high school teachers of English in Khemisset only: other levels, schools subjects and cities are not included.
- It would have been better if other research instruments and data collection methods were used.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study is about teachers' attitudes towards RT and PD. It started by claiming that these attitudes can be an obstacle to teachers' PD. The main purpose is to stress the following point: attitudes can be the key for teachers to become reflective and develop professionally. If we manage to understand those attitudes and identify how they affect teachers' behaviors and practices, effective approaches and methods can be suggested to help teachers become more reflective and consequently develop professionally. Therefore, further studies are required for comprehensive understanding of teachers' attitudes towards RT and PD.

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